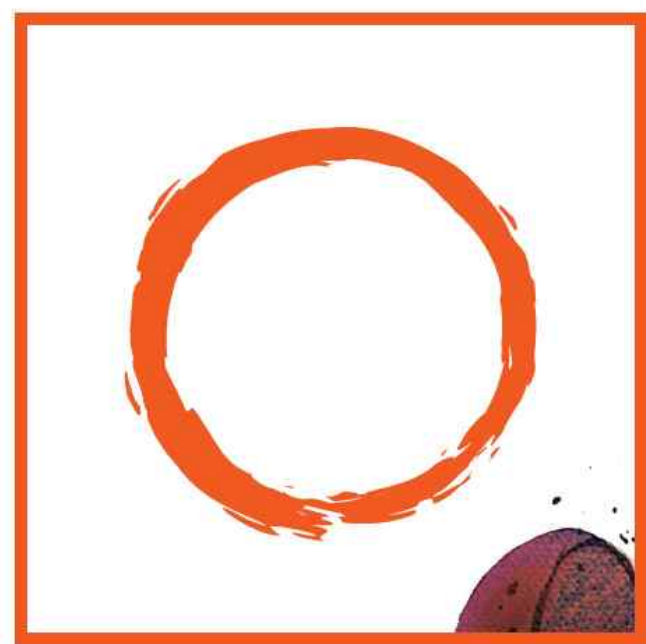




NICE UPON A TIME AT THE END OF THE WORLD™

JASON AARON

ALEXANDRE TEFENKGI

LEE LOUGHRIDGE

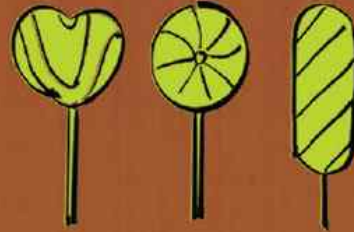


#2
BOOM!
STUDIOS



BOOK ONE

LOVE IN THE WASTELAND



CHAPTER TWO

THE PROVERBS OF SURVIVAL

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VARIANT COVERS BY
FRANY
MIKE DEL MUNDO
PEACH MOMOKO

WHATNOT EXCLUSIVE
VARIANT COVER BY
ARCH APOLAR





I PACKED EVERYTHING I COULD THINK OF.

THAT'S NOT TRUE. I CAN DEFINITELY THINK OF A LOT MORE STUFF. BUT I CAN'T...



I CAN'T TAKE EVERYTHING, CAN I?

I MISS THIS PLACE ALREADY. BUT...I THINK THIS IS WHAT I SHOULD DO. I MEAN, PROBABLY.

SHOULD I KNOW? HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU KNOW OR NOT?

I BET YOU BOTH KNEW.



YOU ALWAYS SEEMED TO KNOW EVERYTHING. RIGHT UP UNTIL...

IF I DON'T... COME BACK...OR IF I COME BACK LIKE...LIKE YOU... I JUST...

THANK YOU, MOM AND DAD. FOR ALL OF THIS.

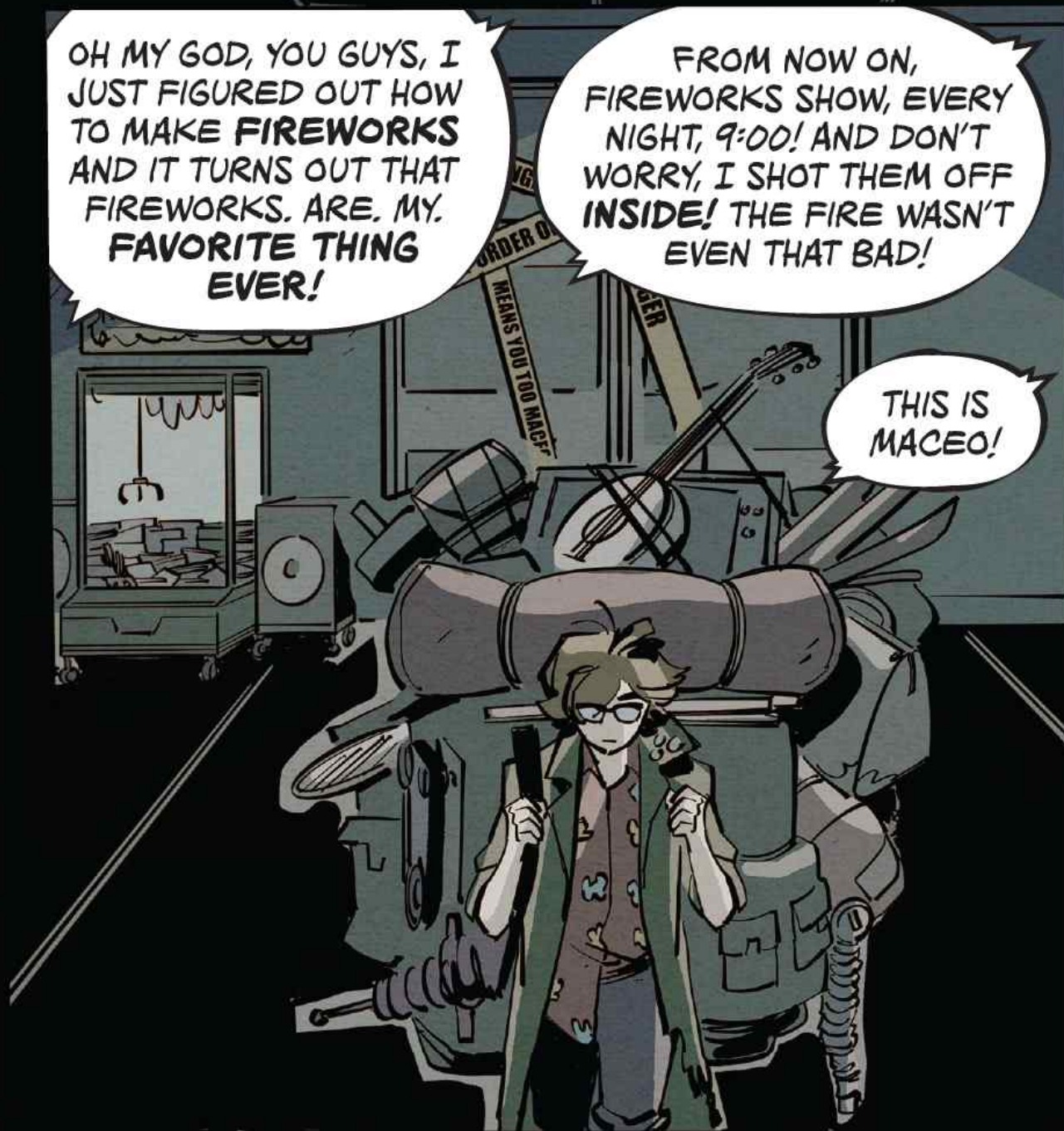
FOR THE WORLD YOU GAVE ME.



I LOVE YOU.

THIS IS MACEO.





OH MY GOD, YOU GUYS, I JUST FIGURED OUT HOW TO MAKE **FIREWORKS** AND IT TURNS OUT THAT FIREWORKS ARE MY **FAVORITE THING EVER!**

FROM NOW ON, FIREWORKS SHOW, EVERY NIGHT, 9:00! AND DON'T WORRY, I SHOT THEM OFF **INSIDE!** THE FIRE WASN'T EVEN THAT BAD!

THIS IS MACEO!



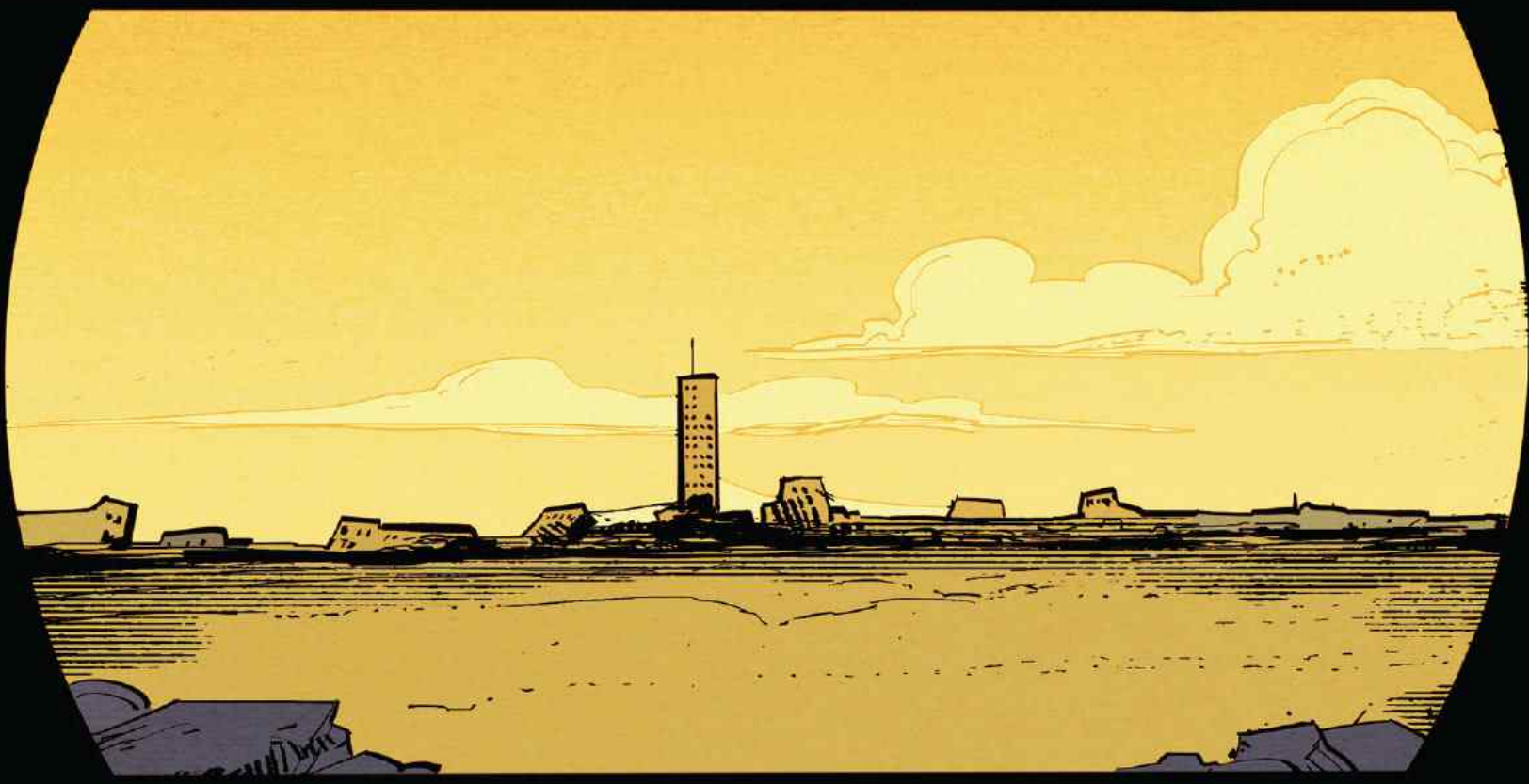
WOW! PEANUT BUTTER AND CHOCOLATE! HOW HAS NOBODY ELSE EVER THOUGHT OF THIS?! THIS IS MACEO, WORLD'S GREATEST **INVENTOR!**



JUST HAD A SUPER GREAT IDEA! THE OLD SWIMMING POOL! I'M FILLING IT WITH ALL OF OUR BOOKS! **BOOK POOL!**

I LOVE MY TOWER! I'M NEVER LEAVING THIS PLACE!

THIS IS MACEO!



They had walked for hours.

The sea winds spit glass and searing salt at their backs.



The sun-bludgeoned ground blistered their feet through their shoes.



If they walked for a million more hours, it would be no different.



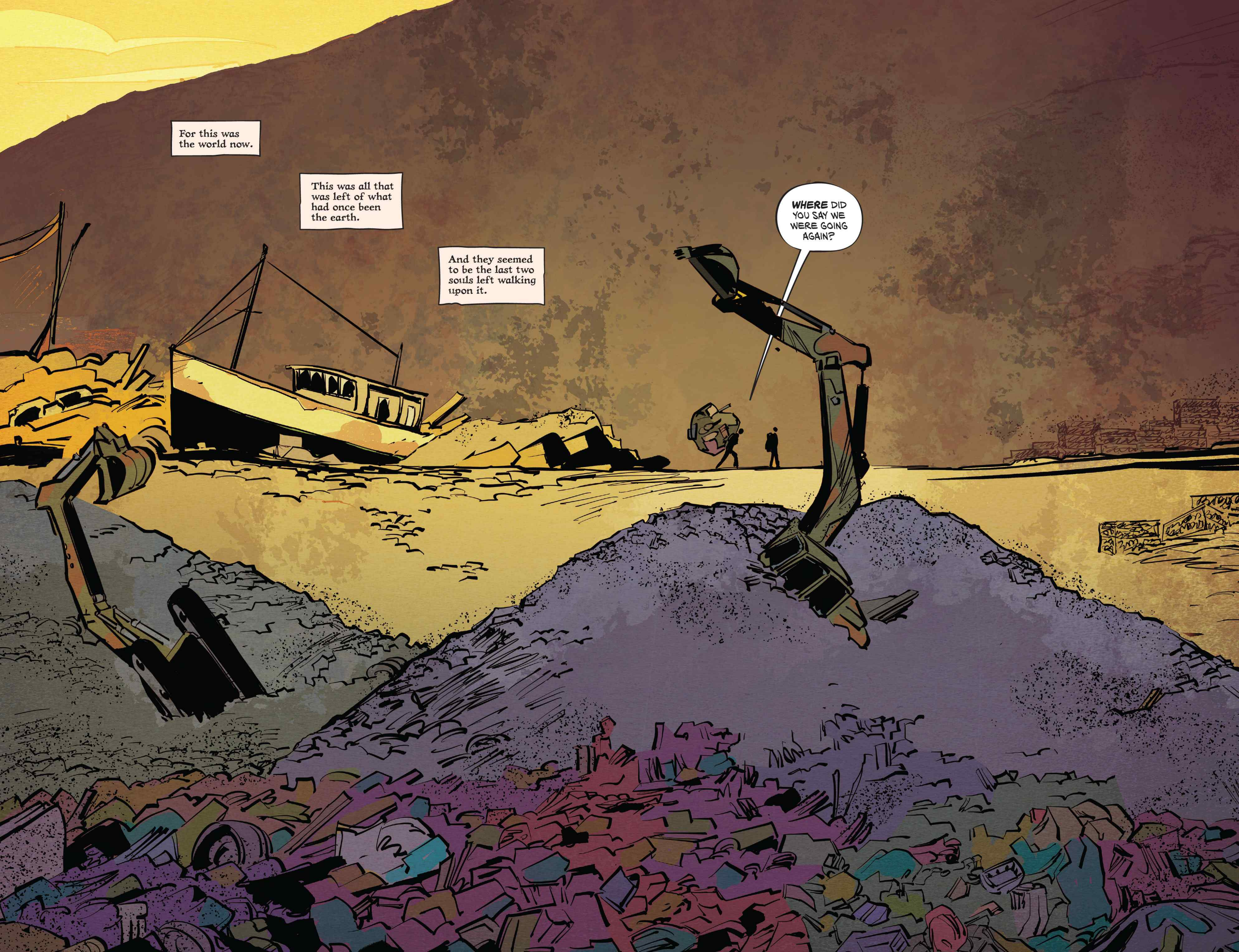
UM. HEY, MEZZY?

For this was
the world now.

This was all that
was left of what
had once been
the earth.

And they seemed
to be the last two
souls left walking
upon it.

WHERE DID
YOU SAY WE
WERE GOING
AGAIN?





Hunting.



Skinning.



Eating
without
puking.



Making socks from rat organs.



Starting
fires with
wet garbage.



Putting
out fires.



Noodling.



Wound sewing.



Orienteering
in high smog.



Foraging.

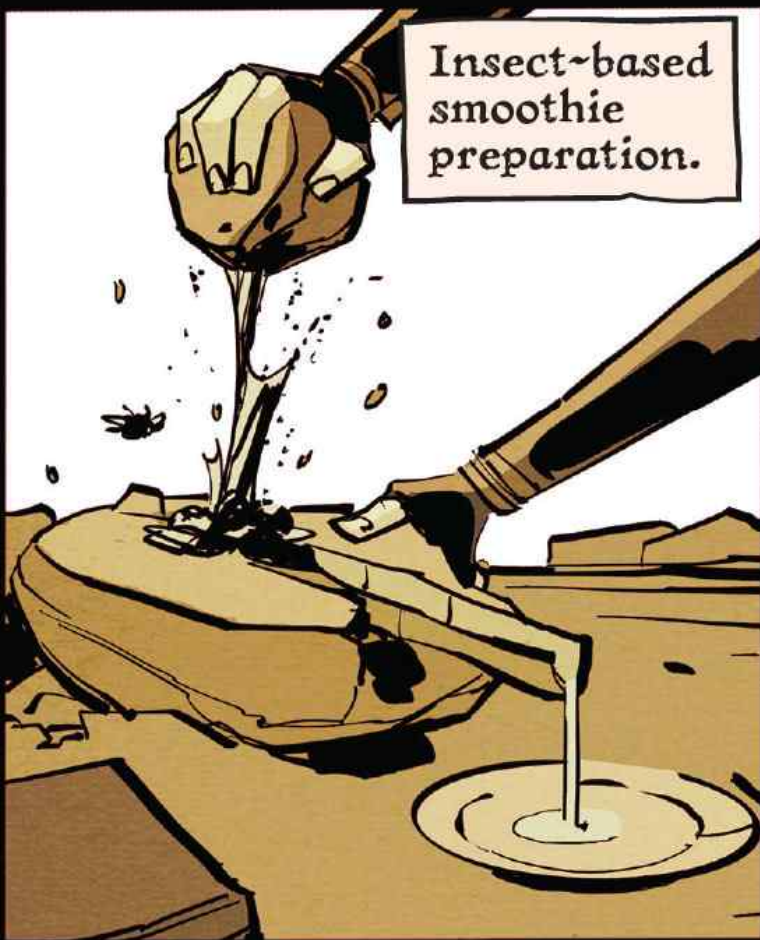


Poison
mushroom
recognition.



Sleeping with
eyes open.

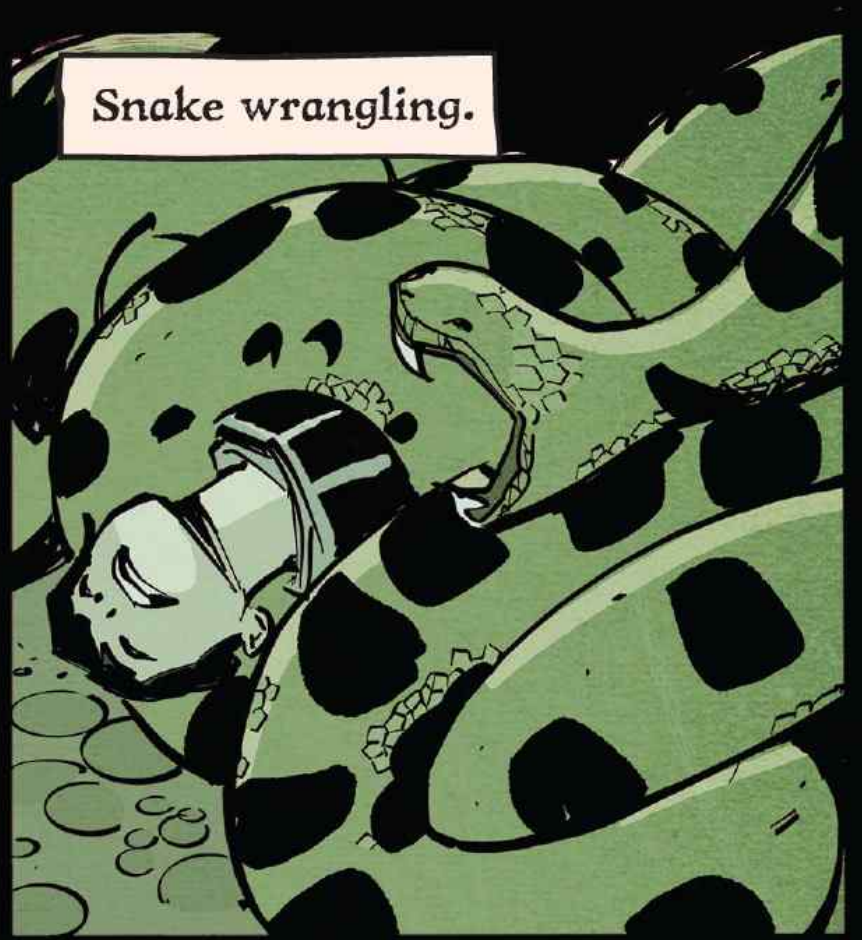




Insect-based smoothie preparation.



Dog care.



Snake wrangling.



Fishing.



Bird study.



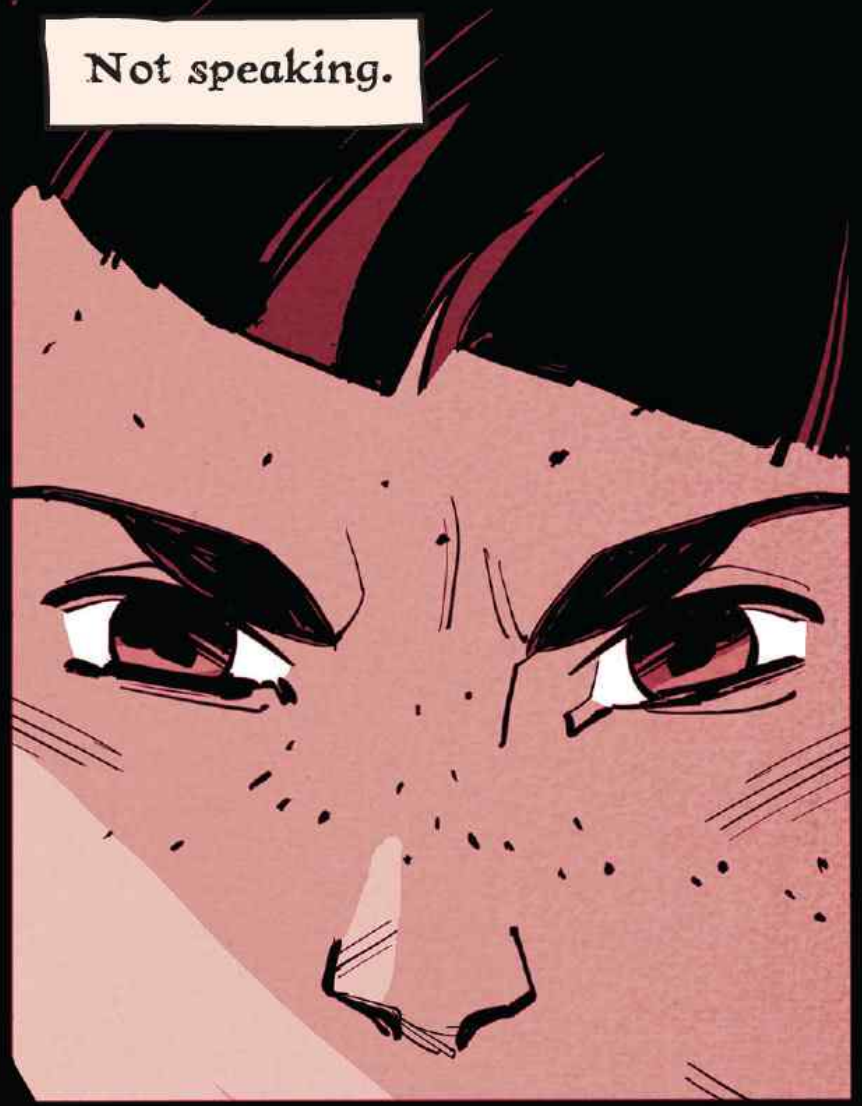
Not dying.



Not dying.



Not dying.



Not speaking.



Not feeling.



Not killing oneself each night.



Knot tying.









As if they'd been
swallowed by the
the Wasteland...

SHUT
UP AND
RUN!









Above, there was
the suffocating
storm.

The Wasteland's
whisper.

While below...



Below were the beasts
that swarmed from
miles around...

...drawn by the
smell of sweat-
drenched *meat*.

The travelers were
trapped between the
wilding heavens and
a frenzied hell.

But Mezzy knew
how to eviscerate a
rat in such a way...

...that its wails of
suffering might give
the others pause.

This she learned
from the book
she carried.

The book of
the *Rangers*.

MACEO...

YOU CAN
LET GO OF
MY HAND
NOW.



IT'LL BE HOURS BEFORE THE STORM BLOWS PAST. WE SHOULD GET SOME SLEEP WHILE WE CAN, BEFORE THE RATS COME BACK.

SLEEP?! HOW COULD ANYONE POSSIBLY SLEEP IN A PLACE LIKE...



ZZZZZZZ



OH MAN.

SUDDENLY, I... I WISH I WAS HOME.

IN MY TOWER.



IN MY INVENTING ROOM WITH ALL THE BEST BITS AND BOBS IN THE WHOLE WORLD THAT I COULD USE TO...



TO... DO...

...WHAT I DO...

TO...



...DREAM A BETTER WORLD.



WHHRGH!

WHAT THE HELL?!



GOOD MORNING!

I THINK IT'S MORNING! I DIDN'T SLEEP!

HEY, HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR **SYRUP BOWL**? WITH MELTED CHOCOLATE BARS OR MELTED COOKIE BITS OR BOTH ALL SWIRLED TOGETHER?



SWEET! TART POCKETS ARE READY!

HOW...DID YOU...



OH *THIS*? I JUST THREW TOGETHER A **GENERATOR** FROM SOME OF THIS JUNK.

IT SUCKS UP **METHANE** COMING OFF THE ROTTING TRASH AND CONVERTS IT TO POWER.



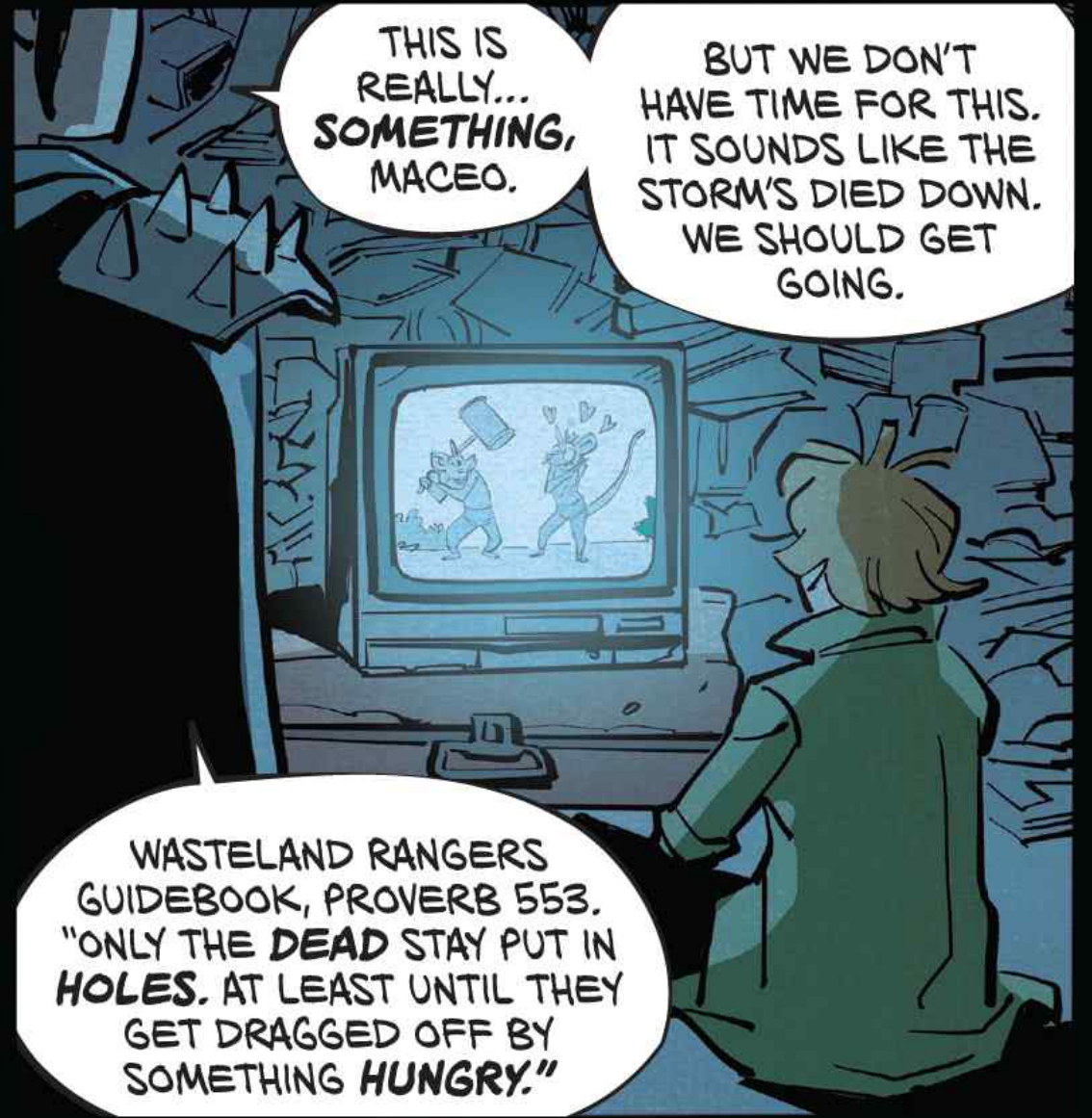
I LIKE **CARTOONS** WITH BREAKFAST.

HOW ABOUT YOU, MEZZY?



WHAT'S...A
CARTOON?

HA! THAT'S A GOOD
ONE. NEXT YOU'LL TELL
ME YOU'VE NEVER HAD
A **SYRUP BOWL**
BEFORE.



THIS IS
REALLY...
SOMETHING,
MACEO.

BUT WE DON'T
HAVE TIME FOR THIS.
IT SOUNDS LIKE THE
STORM'S DIED DOWN.
WE SHOULD GET
GOING.

WASTELAND RANGERS
GUIDEBOOK, PROVERB 553.
"ONLY THE **DEAD** STAY PUT IN
HOLES. AT LEAST UNTIL THEY
GET DRAGGED OFF BY
SOMETHING **HUNGRY**."



OH! THIS
IS ONE OF MY
FAVORITES! HAVE
YOU SEEN IT?!

"WHAT **MADE** THE
WASTELAND?"

UM...
NO.



WHY ARE THE
SKIES FIRE AND
THE WATERS
SOUR?

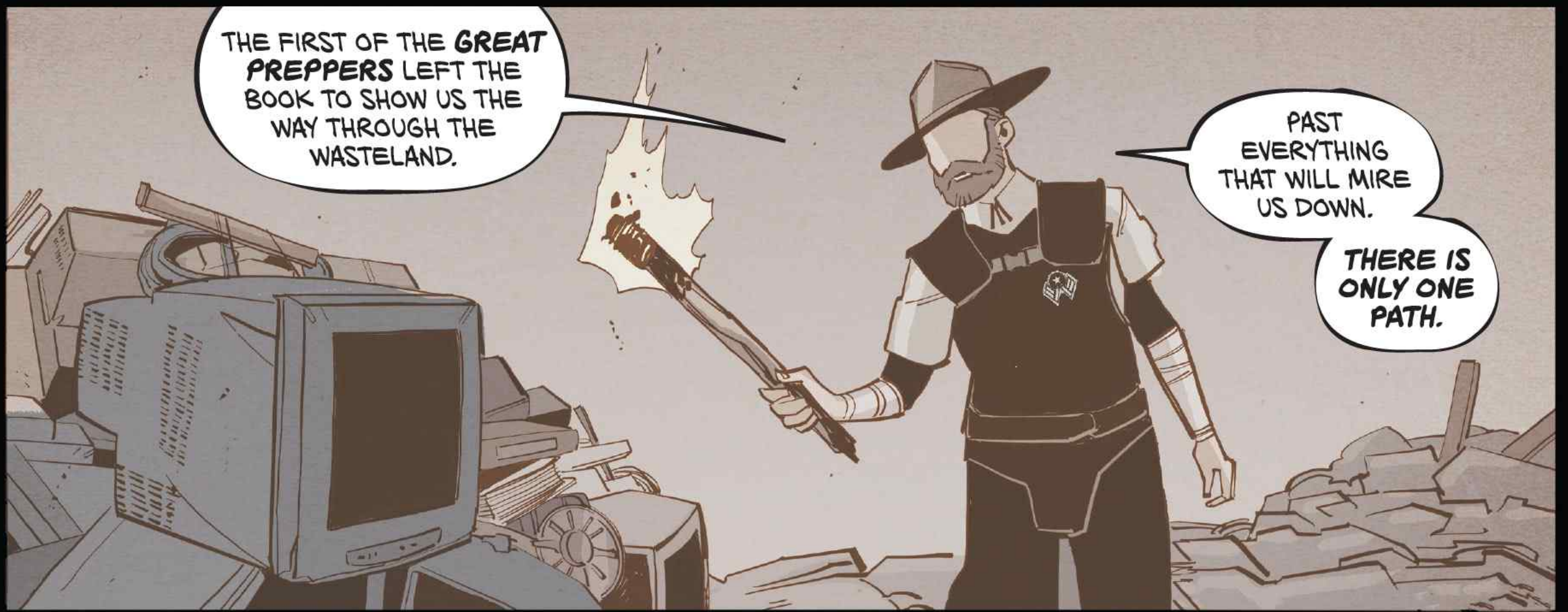
**RANGER
EZMERELDA,**
TELL US WHY.



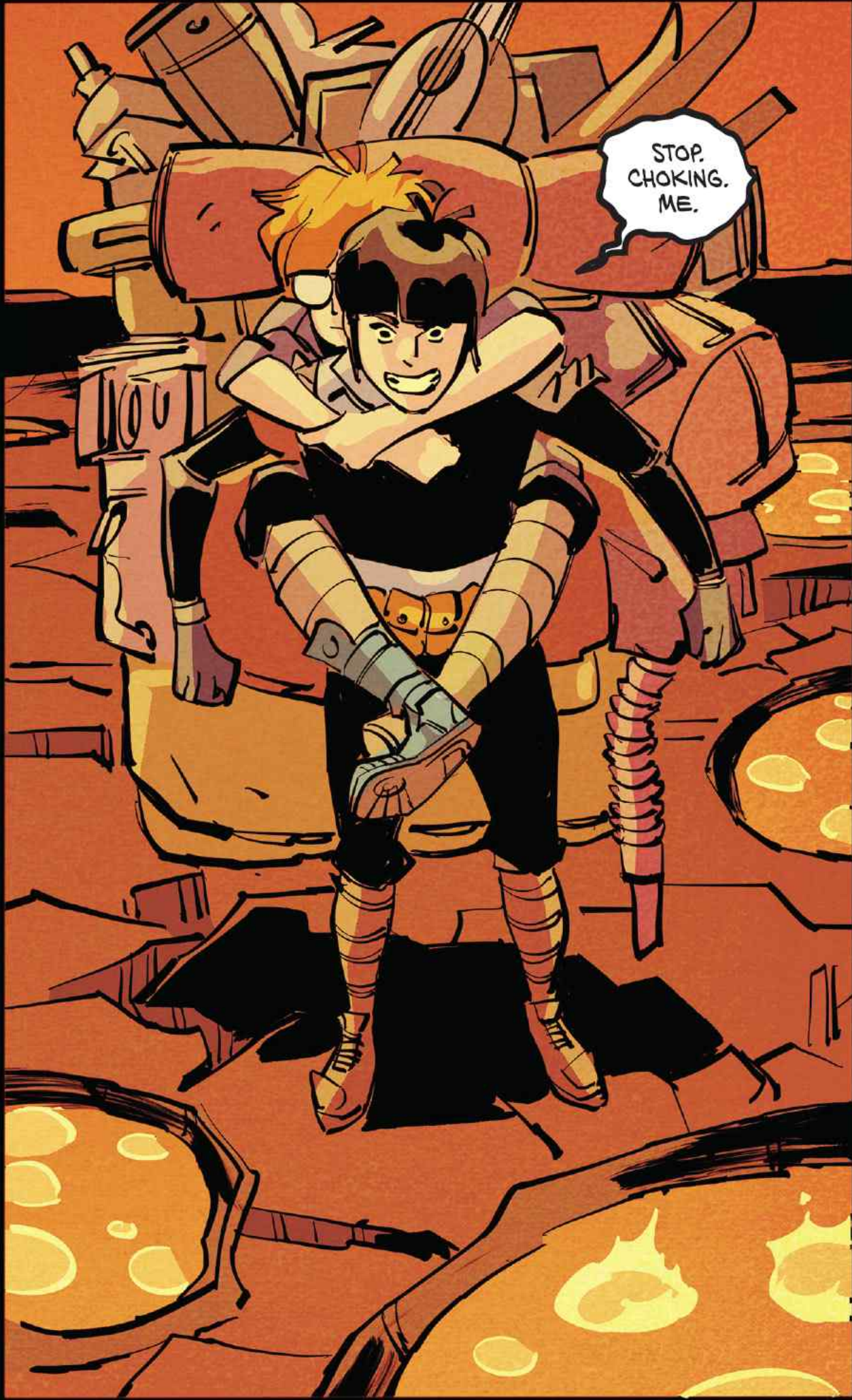
BECAUSE OF
THE FRUITS OF
USELESSNESS. BECAUSE
OF DISTRACTIONS FROM
THE PATH.

BECAUSE THE
WORLD WAS NOT
PREPARED.

VERY GOOD,
YOUNG RANGER.
YOU KNOW THE
BOOK WELL.
THE BOOK IS
SURVIVAL.











COOL, YOU GOT A **TAPE RECORDER**, TOO? I USE MINE TO RECORD MY **IDEAS**. AND LEAVE **MESSAGES** FOR...WELL, NEVER MIND.

HEY, SO DO YOU THINK MAYBE NOW YOU COULD TELL ME WHERE WE'RE **GOING**?

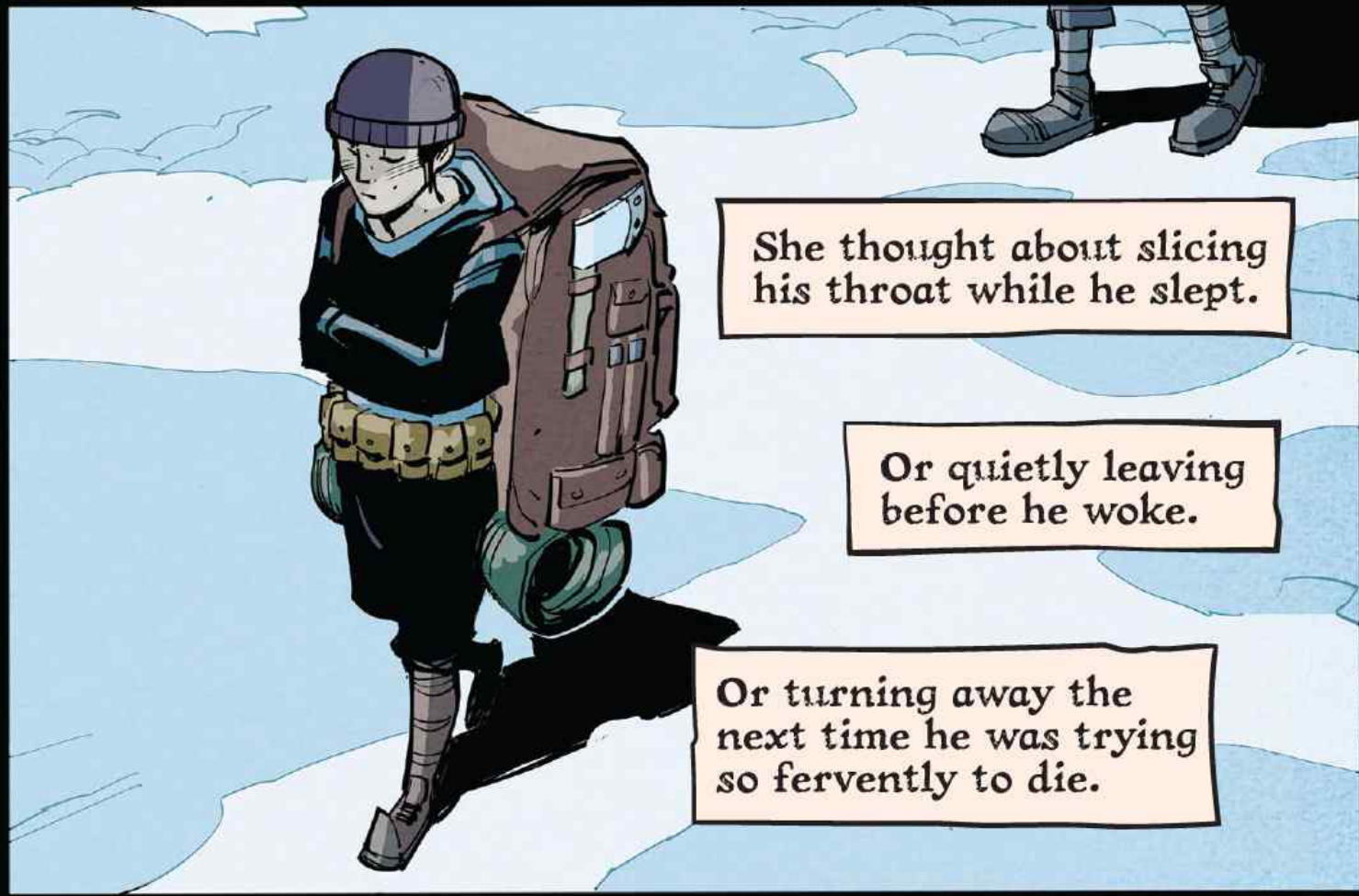


WE'RE GOING **AWAY**.

FROM EVERYTHING WE'VE EVER KNOWN. IF YOU DON'T WANNA DO THAT, THEN YOU'RE ON THE **WRONG PATH**.



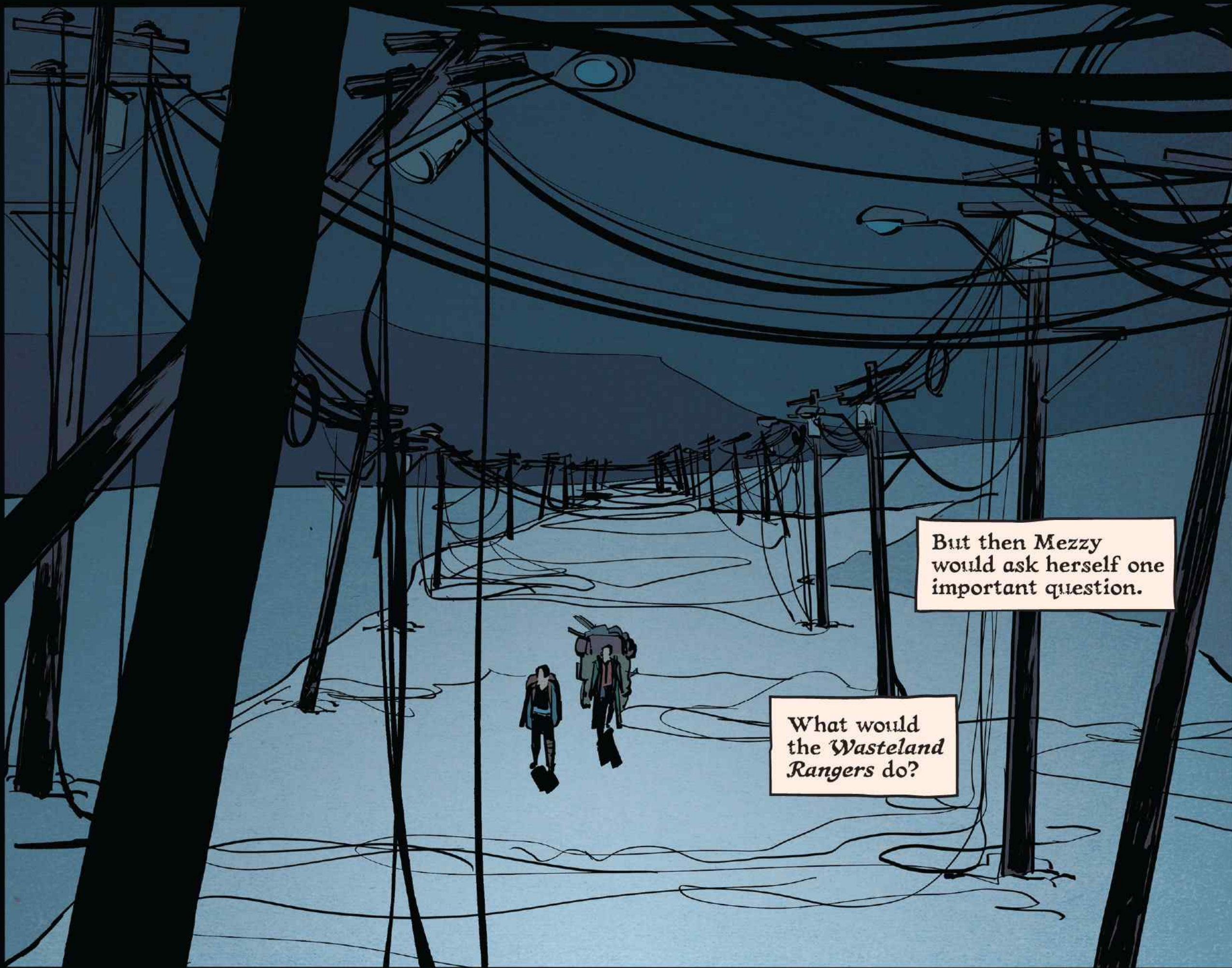
UM, OKAY. SURE. THAT SOUNDS **GOOD**.



She thought about slicing his throat while he slept.

Or quietly leaving before he woke.

Or turning away the next time he was trying so fervently to die.



But then Mezzy would ask herself one important question.

What would the *Wasteland Rangers* do?

The answer was
always clear.



MACEO,
WAKE UP.

HRR?

I NEED
TO TALK TO
YOU.



HAVE YOU
EVER HEARD
OF SOMETHING
CALLED...

...CHRISTMAS?



HUH?
SOUNDED
LIKE YOU SAID...
CHRISTMAS?

THIS IS A
DREAM,
RIGHT?



BACK IN THE OLDIE
OLDEN YEARS, THERE
WERE THINGS THEY CALLED
HOLIDAYS. MOST OF THEM
WERE PRETTY STUPID AND
USELESS. BUT...



MACEO...
I'VE NEVER SAID
THIS TO ANYONE IN
MY LIFE.

I LOVE
CHRISTMAS.

THE RANGERS
WEREN'T ALLOWED TO
CELEBRATE IT. IT WAS
JUST A LEGEND PASSED
DOWN AMONG THE
LITTLES.



YEAH...I
REMEMBER
NOW. THAT WAS
SOMETHING MY
PARENTS
DID.

I'D
FORGOTTEN
ALL ABOUT
CHRISTMAS.



IT'S A DAY WHEN
EVERYBODY **GIVES**
THINGS TO EACH OTHER.
AND THERE ARE SO MANY
TREES THAT PEOPLE HAVE
THEM IN THEIR HOUSES.
AND FOR ONE NIGHT, NOT A
CREATURE IS STIRRING,
NOT EVEN A RAT.

AT LEAST THAT'S
WHAT I **THINK** IT'S
LIKE. I'VE ONLY
EVER CELEBRATED
CHRISTMAS IN MY
MIND.

UNTIL
NOW.



**MERRY
CHRISTMAS,
MACEO.**

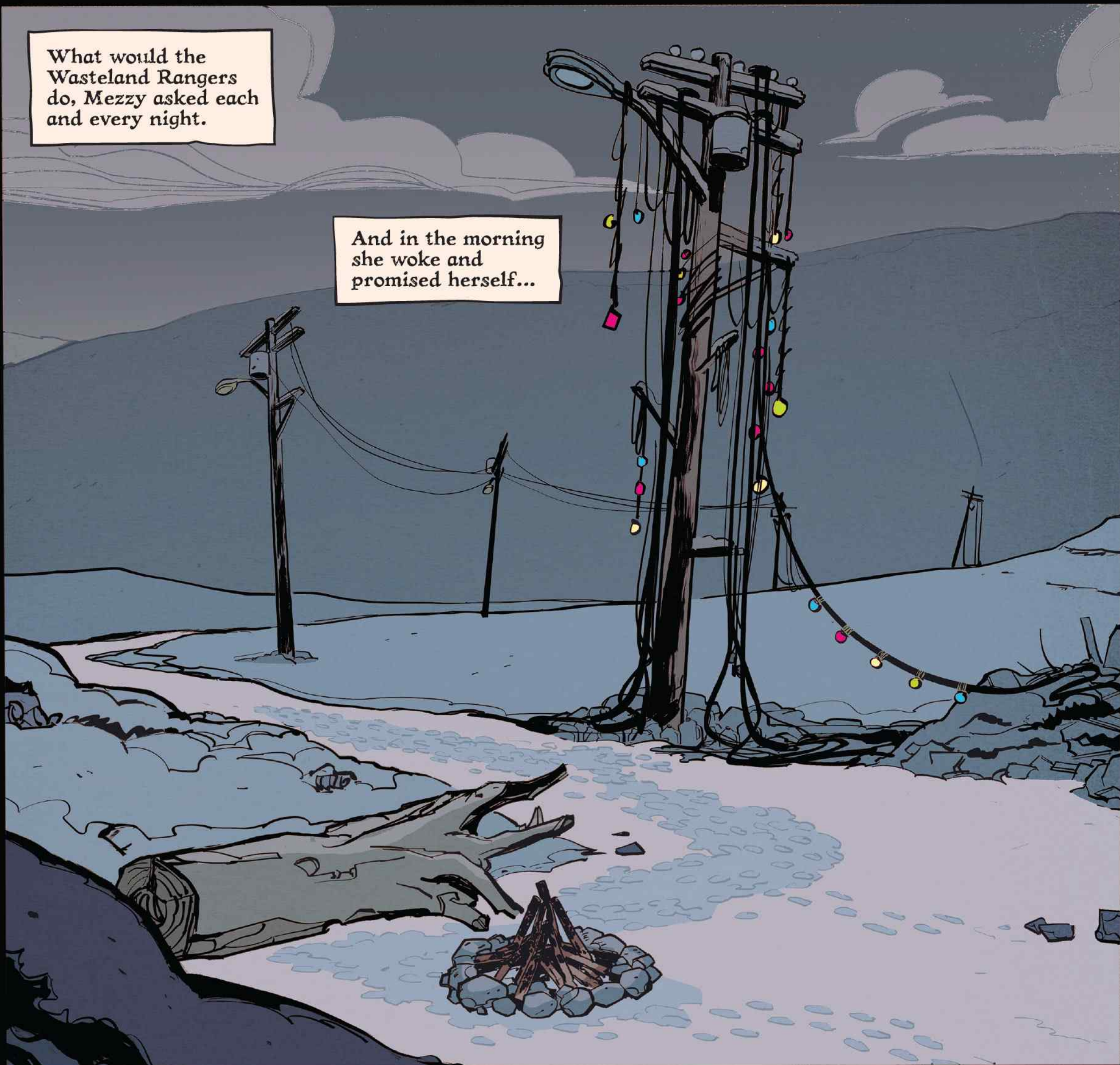
YOU...GOT
ME A CHRISTMAS
PRESENT?

LET'S NOT
MAKE A BIG
THING OF IT. IT'S
JUST A LITTLE
SOMETHING...



What would the
Wasteland Rangers
do, Mezzy asked each
and every night.

And in the morning
she woke and
promised herself...



...That she would
endeavor to do
the *opposite*.

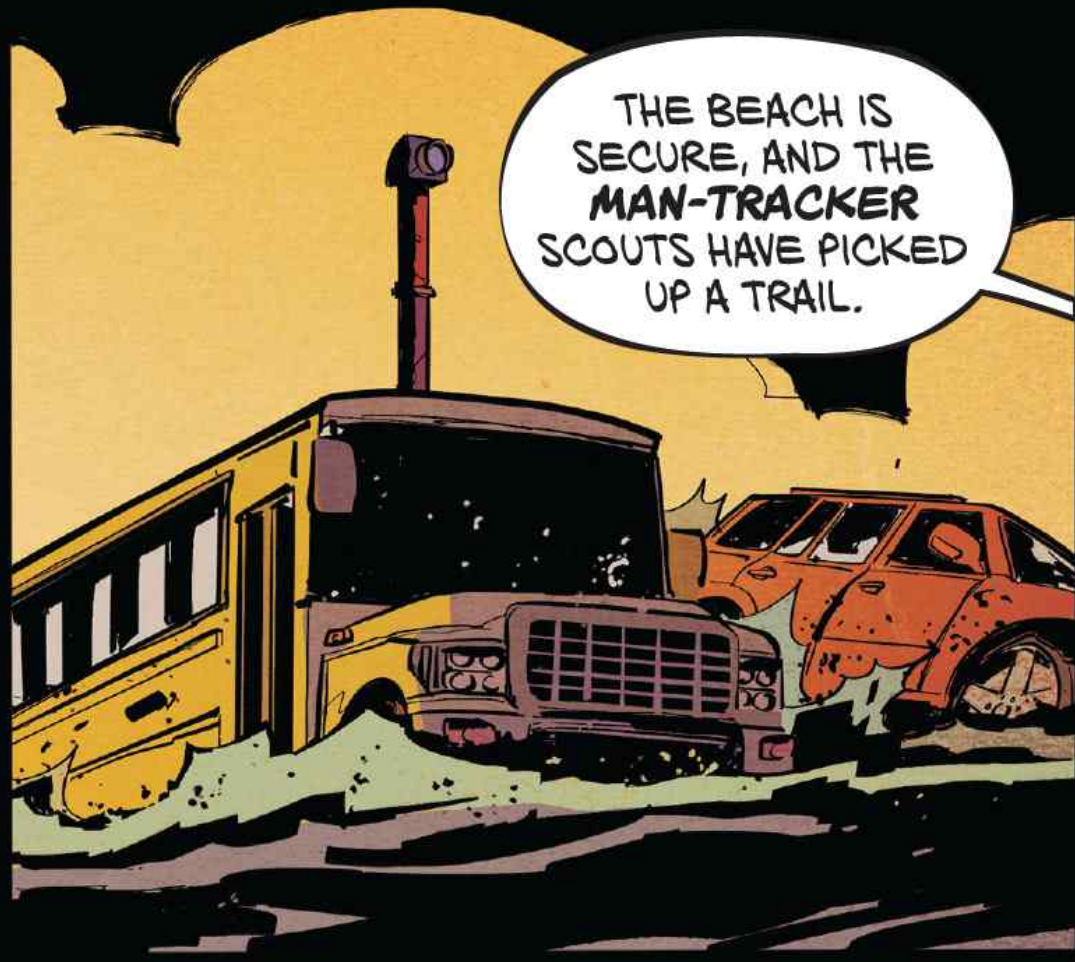




"ALPHA
RANGER...
REPORT."

"EZMERELDA'S BOAT
WAS DISCOVERED, SUNK
TO STREET LEVEL. NO
SIGN OF A CORPSE."

"A DIVING TEAM WAS
DISPATCHED FOR RECON,
WHILE THE **SUBMABUS**
MADE LANDFALL."



THE BEACH IS
SECURE, AND THE
MAN-TRACKER
SCOUTS HAVE PICKED
UP A TRAIL.



WE RECOGNIZE
MEZZY'S TRACKS, BUT
THERE'S SOMEONE
ELSE TRAVELING
WITH HER.



SOMEONE
WHO **FALLS**
DOWN A LOT.

AND
CARRIES WAY
TOO MUCH.

DOESN'T
MAKE SENSE. WHY
WOULD SHE LET SOME
WASTEBRAIN SLOW
HER DOWN?

DON'T YOU
SEE? IT'S EVEN
WORSE THAN WE
THOUGHT.

MEZZY'S
ALREADY GOING
NATIVE.

HER
UNCIVILIZING
HAS BEGUN.

THEN WE
MUST MAKE HASTE,
MY SCOUTS. ALL
DEPENDS ON IT.

FOR IF WE
CANNOT FIND
EZMERELDA...

THE WASTELAND RANGERS

...WILL NEVER
RECLAIM THE
WORLD FROM
RUIN.



To be continued...

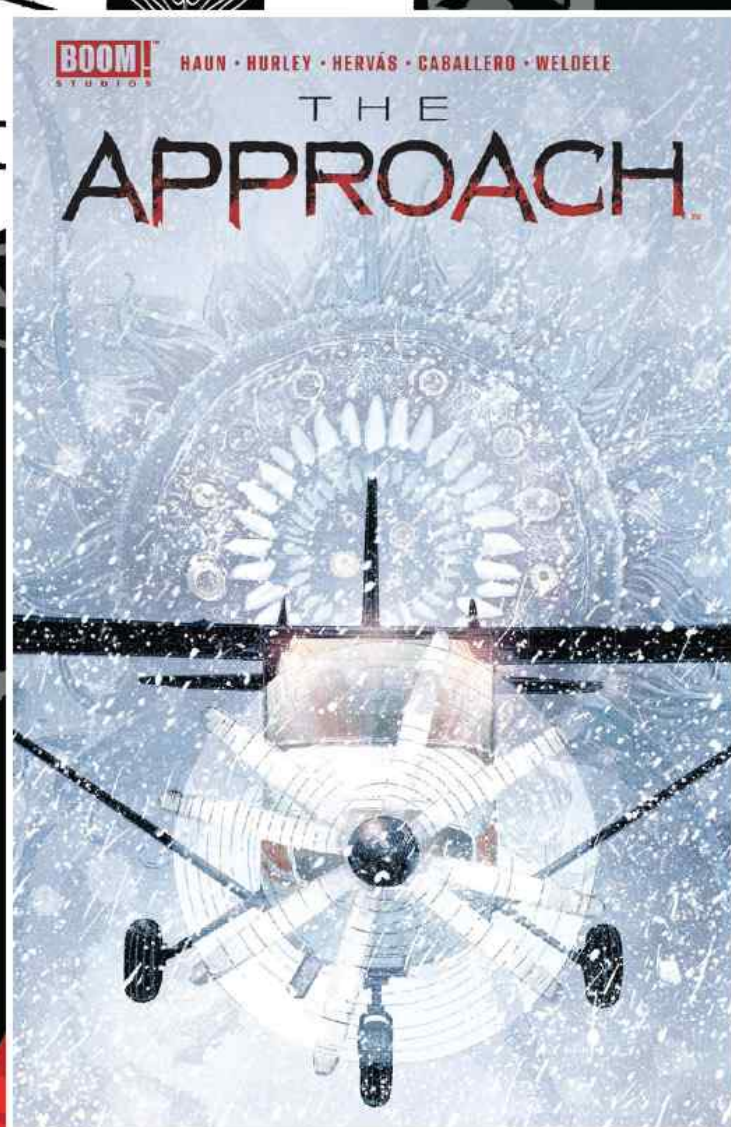
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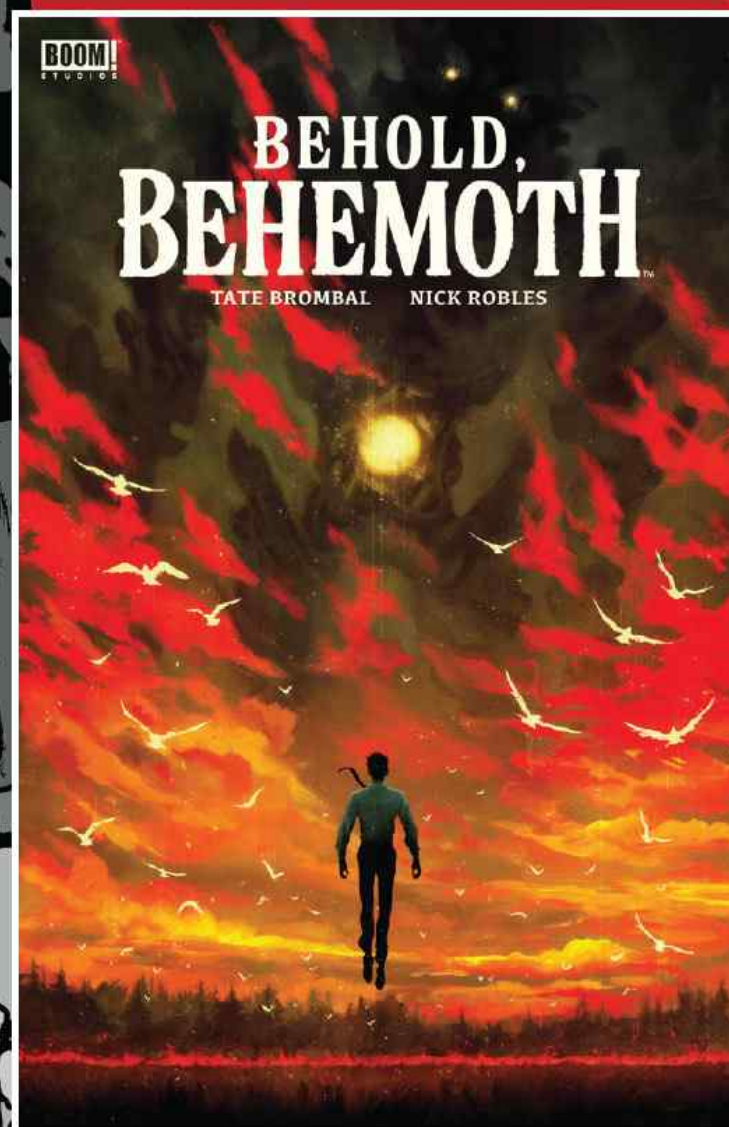
DAMN THEM ALL

Meet Ellie "Bloody El" Hawthorne: occultist-for-hire. Following the death of Ellie's uncle, an infamous magician and occult detective, the 72 devils of the Ars Goetia are mysteriously freed from their infernal realm. Now it's up to Ellie to track down each of these exiled demons and damn them right back to Hell by any means necessary... holy water, conjuration, or just her trusty, rusty claw hammer.

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